

# Draft Alternatives Report Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw Trail Study Area

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# **Introduction**

Potential trail, activity management and resource protection alternatives for the Doudy Draw/Eldorado Mountain Trail Study Area (TSA) are presented for review. OSMP Staff have compiled alternatives for the Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw Trail Study Area based on input from the public, information in the Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw Inventory Report, and staff knowledge.

The management alternatives analysis presents an array of potential management actions and different options to accomplish each alternative. Many of the management alternatives focus on potential trail possibilities, since the goal of the trail study area planning is to determine the current status and future direction for recreational access in the TSA. Several natural resource management alternatives that may affect recreational access are presented.

Potential issues associated with each alternative are identified. The Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw Inventory Report is referenced to provide more detailed information for review of potential issues. Four subareas of the Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw Trail Study Area are identified to help reviewers more easily find and evaluate proposed alternatives. The quality of the visitor experience and environmental quality of the TSA are reflected by the Habitat Conservation Area and Natural Area designations. This part of the OSMP system is not intended to serve as a passive recreation area or as an agricultural management area.

## **Vision - Desired Conditions and Goals**

A range of visitor experiences and improved ecological conditions form a “desired condition” and management direction for the TSA. An ecological goal for the TSA is to preserve, protect and restore the high quality and diverse habitat in the area. A passive recreation goal for the area is to provide visitor experiences consistent with a backcountry, primitive setting and to offer opportunities for solitude and remoteness.

## **Passive Recreation Desired Condition**

The Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw Trail Study Area contains lands designated as Natural Area and Habitat Conservation Area. It does not contain Passive Recreation Areas or Agricultural Areas. This area is relatively remote from residential development except along Eldorado Springs Drive and in the town of Eldorado Springs. The area provides a back-country, primitive experience with opportunities for wildlife viewing, solitude and some of the best opportunities for protection of sensitive wildlife habitats. Visitor use in the area appears to be increasing, requiring careful decision making to preserve this “backcountry” visitor experience in the rapidly urbanizing Front Range..

***Community Ditch Subarea*** - Use in this subarea is relatively low compared to the rest of the OSMP system, yet this is the busiest part of TSA and is closer to roads and

development. Experiences consistent with this area focus more on ease of access, dog walking and exercising.

***Flatirons Vista Subarea*** – This area receives most use from the Flatirons Vista Trailhead. Mixed terrain appeals to many visitors seeking a less crowded area and more challenging and extensive exercise opportunities. Horseback riding is a popular activity in this area.

***Doudy Draw/Spring Brook Subarea*** – This part of the TSA has more rugged terrain, engendering a sense of remoteness. This area was initially proposed as a Habitat Conservation Area, but was changed to a Natural Area with a heightened level of protection including restoration and monitoring. Visitor experiences provided by the area include a feeling of solitude and an opportunity for nature appreciation.

***Eldorado Mountain Habitat Conservation Area*** - The Habitat Conservation Area offers more difficult terrain and a sense of remoteness. The quality and variability of the native ecosystems appeal to visitors searching for an area that appears more wild and relatively untrammeled.

### **Ecological Desired Condition**

The TSA is part of the transition zone from plains to mountains. This transition zone, or ecotone, provides more habitat variability and diversity resulting in a greater abundance of wildlife relatively free of human encroachment. The extent and contiguity of public lands support a landscape level connectivity with minimal fragmentation of native ecosystems from the plains grasslands to the high peaks of the Continental Divide. This ecological connectivity is rare along the Front Range.

The ecological goal for the Trail Study Area is to maintain the high quality and natural diversity of wildlife habitats and restore areas that have the greatest likelihood for success in achieving a higher native diversity and higher habitat quality. This is especially true of the HCA.

### **Cultural Resource Desired Condition**

This area is rich in prehistoric and historic resources including paleontological localities, Native American sites and historic sites that define a local landscape with a recent history of agriculture, railroad, mining and water development. The cultural resource goal for the area is to stabilize and protect cultural and historic resources. Some cultural resources may be interpreted for visitor education and appreciation.

### **Agricultural Resource Desired Condition**

Livestock grazing is the current agricultural use. Forage production for livestock likely occurred in the past in portions of the TSA. Livestock grazing has been removed from the area west of Doudy Draw over the past 15 years. Grazing continues east of Doudy Draw.

The agricultural goal for the TSA is to provide sustainable grazing that is consistent with OSMP ecological goals and compatible with concurrent passive recreational use. Sustainable grazing seeks to reduce the abundance of non-native plants that degrade the structure and composition of native vegetation.

## **Doudy Draw Natural Area**

### **Management Area Context**

Natural Areas typically have varying levels of visitor use, types of activities, and availability of facilities. Ecosystem conditions are variable--many natural areas have ecological systems in good condition, while some show evidence of human use and impacts. As stated in the Visitor Master Plan, the goals for natural areas include:

- Accommodating low-impact visitor activities where adequate trails exist or can be built, and resource impacts can be minimized.
- Providing opportunities for passive recreational and educational activities that require topographic relief or a natural setting (e.g., hang/paragliding, climbing/bouldering, nature study, scenic viewing).
- Protecting the quality of natural and agricultural resources (especially where high value resources exist).
- Eliminating undesignated trails when they are redundant or damaging to resources.

### **Trail and Trailhead Alternatives**

#### **Community Ditch Subarea**

##### **1. Doudy Draw Trailhead (Map 1, Location 1)**

The Doudy Draw Trailhead is located approximately two miles west of Highway 93 on Eldorado Springs Drive. The trailhead accommodates parking for approximately 32 vehicles without horse trailers. South Mesa Trailhead is 200 feet north of the Doudy Draw Trailhead and is accessible by an at-grade pedestrian crossing of Eldorado Springs Drive (SH 170) and has 51 parking spaces. The new Marshall Mesa Trailhead will be two miles east of the Doudy Draw Trailhead. The Marshall Mesa Trailhead will have 55 auto parking spaces and 6 horse trailer spaces. Restrooms are currently available at the Doudy Draw Trailhead, at South Mesa Trailhead and will be available at the new Marshall Mesa Trailhead. Approximately 34,000 visits were recorded at the Doudy Draw Trailhead in 2004.

**Option 1a:** Add six horse trailer spaces to the 32 vehicle spaces.

**Option 1b:** Improve service for pedestrians and bikes and expand parking by eliminating horse trailer parking. Horse trailer parking is provided at South Mesa, Marshall Mesa, Flatirons Vista and Greenbelt Plateau Trailheads.

**Option 1c:** Add two or three parking spaces by improving signing. Improve safety by extending the parking lot access road to align with the South Mesa trailhead access road.

**Option 1d:** Add two or three parking spaces by improving signing.

**Option 1e:** Maintain the current number of parking spaces and configuration.

### **Issues**

- Adding parking capacity may trigger requirements for acceleration and deceleration lanes on Eldorado Springs Drive (SH 170) based on CDOT standards, as well as other permitting.
- Potential impacts on native shrublands and grassland nesting bird habitat associated with enlarging the trailhead parking lot and moving the access road.
- Horse trailer parking requires designated spaces and properly designed access.

## **2. Lower Doudy Draw Loop Trail (Map 1, Location 2)**

This proposed alternative is a loop trail southwest of the Doudy Draw Trailhead. The trail loop would provide a shorter loop and allow for more varied visitor experiences in the area.

**Option 2a:** Construct a designated trail loop. Investigate accessibility for people in wheelchairs or individuals who are mobility impaired. Evaluate potential for specific uses and activities. Improve design and signing of restroom and picnic area.

**Option 2b:** Discourage use of the undesignated trail through signs and restoration to the west and north of the service road. Improve design and signing of restroom and picnic area.

### **Issues**

- Improved signing and fencing will be necessary to direct visitors, to minimize development of undesignated trails, and to prevent resource damage.
- The proposed trails are not in highest quality grassland matrix.

- Visitation is relatively high and increasing.

### **3. Eldorado Springs Pedestrian Gates (Map 1, Location 3)**

Five pedestrian gates along, or in the vicinity of, Eldorado Springs Drive have resulted in several unsustainable trails and resource impacts.

**Option 3a:** Provide one or more gates for neighborhood use and with designated trail access. Remove other pedestrian gates.

**Option 3b:** Remove the pedestrian gates and reclaim the undesignated trails. Access would be provided at the Douby Draw and new Marshall Mesa Trailheads.

#### **Issues**

- Undesignated trails fragment valuable grassland nesting bird habitat (especially for common nighthawks), high quality bluestem communities, and rare plant populations.
- Undesignated trails encourage the spread of jointed goatgrass into the larger grassland matrix (one of only two known populations of jointed goatgrass in TSA is near the Eldorado Springs Fire House).
- Pedestrian gates and unlocked vehicle gates were placed years ago with no plan for sustainable use and access.
- Undesignated trails climb steep hills making sustainable alignment difficult.

### **4. South Boulder Creek Trail Connection (Map 1, Location 4)**

This proposed alternative connects the northeast part of the TSA to the South Boulder Creek Trail and Trailhead across Eldorado Springs Drive. This alternative will be evaluated as part of the Shanahan/South Mesa Trial Study Area planning process. Issues associated with this alternative include crossing a state highway, two irrigation ditches, wetlands, riparian habitat of South Boulder Creek, Colorado State Natural Area tallgrass prairie, private property and agricultural operations.

## **Flatirons Vista Subarea**

### **5. Flatirons Vista Trailhead (Map 1, Location 5)**

The Flatirons Vista Trailhead is located on Highway 93 south of Highway 128. The trailhead accomodates approximately 30 vehicles without horse trailers. Greenbelt Plateau Trailhead is less than ½ mile northeast via a stoplight on Highway 93. The new

Marshall Mesa Trailhead is two miles north and will have 55 auto parking spaces and 6 horse trailer spaces. No restrooms are provided at this trailhead. Approximately 26,000 visits were recorded at the Flatirons Vista Trailhead in 2004.

**Option 5a:** Maintain the current number of trailhead parking spaces and configuration. Better sign the parking lot to maximize parking. Add six horse trailer spaces at Greenbelt Plateau to the 25 vehicle parking spaces.

**Option 5b:** Add six horse trailer spaces to the 30 vehicle parking spaces.

**Option 5c:** Expand auto parking by eliminating horse trailer parking at Flatirons Vista. Horse trailer parking is provided at Marshall Mesa, Doudy Draw and Greenbelt Plateau Trailheads.

**Option 5d:** Improve signing to add two or three vehicle parking spaces.

### **Issues**

- Enlarging trailheads may require construction of acceleration and deceleration lanes on SH 93 based on CDOT standards.
- Agricultural operations requiring use of the trailhead should be considered in any trailhead redesign.
- A rare needle and thread plant community occurs to the west of the trailhead.
- Horse trailer parking requires functional space and affects the amount of useable space for other vehicles.

## **6. Doudy Draw - Flatirons Vista Trail Loops (Map 1, Location 6)**

Two possible stacked trail loops form a “figure 8” south of the Doudy Draw Trail from the Flatirons Vista Trailhead. Undesignated trails in the middle of the “figure 8” and near the Flatirons Vista Trailhead would be reclaimed.

**Desired Visitor Experience** - This part of the Doudy Draw Natural Area is relatively rural and undeveloped and located at the southern edge of the OSMP land system. Access to the identified proposed trails could be expected primarily from the Flatirons Vista Trailhead, and secondarily from the Doudy Draw Trailhead.

Area trails provide a visitor experience that feels remote from urban development and offers the opportunity to travel at a slower pace and enjoy the natural setting. Because this area is closer to the trailheads, it feels more like “front-country” where more people are encountered than in the western part of the Trail Study Area. Opportunities to interpret the prairie to foothills forest ecotone occur in this area.

**Option 6a:** Construct the outer loop trail and the inner loop trail.

**Option 6b:** Construct outer loop trail and designate Xcel power line access road as a trail to form figure 8.

**Options 6c:** Improve Doudy Draw Trail.

### **Issues**

- Significant cultural resources exist in the area and need to be protected.
- Restoring undesignated trails will take sustained effort.
- Trails on flat terrain will braid causing resource impacts and above average maintenance.
- Livestock grazing helps create and sustain undesignated trails.
- Xcel has an access easement to maintain the power line.
- Interpretive opportunities exist at the grassland forest interface.
- Closing some social trails at forest edge will benefit localized big bluestem patches.
- The shoreline of Flatirons Vista pond is subject to trampling and erosion.

## **7. Doudy Draw – Mesa Rim Trail Loop (Map 1, Location 7)**

This proposed trail creates a loop north of the Flatirons Vista Trailhead from the trailhead to the Doudy Draw Trail along the mesa rim.

**Management area context** –The area is relatively rural and away from residential development. Several undesignated trail exist along the mesa edge and on the mesa slope. Livestock grazing is evidenced by cattle trails accessing a nearby water tank. The area has relatively few undesignated trails.

Off trail hiking and horse back riding occur at low levels in the area. Paragliders and hang gliders have used the mesa edge down to Community Ditch in the past for flight training and flying, although the area is currently closed to these uses. Voice and sight/leash dog walking is allowed in the area.

**Desired Visitor Experience** – The area provides passive recreational experiences consistent with a feeling of remoteness. It offers opportunities to get away from the urban environment and enjoy the natural setting and views at a relaxed pace.

**Desired Ecological Condition** – This area is one of the largest un-fragmented blocks of rare tallgrass plant community in the OSMP land system. It offers an opportunity to protect the area’s high wildlife habitat values and diversity, particularly the high quality grasslands and grassland nesting bird habitat (see Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw TSA Inventory Report – Natural Resources section).

**Desired Agriculture Condition** – This area of the TSA provides the opportunity to create a livestock pasture that does not include a recreational trail. There are situations where it is not desirable to have concurrent recreational and livestock grazing activities.

### **Trail Options**

**Option 7a:** Construct a trail north from the Flatirons Vista Trailhead that forms a loop and connects to the Doudy Draw Trail.

**Option 7b:** Do not construct a new trail loop. Continue to encourage on-trail travel but allow off-trail travel in the area.

### **Issues:**

- Paragliding and hang gliding has occurred in the past.
- The area contains high quality native grassland and grassland nesting bird habitat.
- Rare native sedges occur on the edge of the mesa.
- A prairie dog colony exists west of Highway 93 and north of Doudy Draw Trail and the area is designated a prairie dog habitat conservation area.
- Trails contribute to the spread of jointed goatgrass. One of only two known populations of jointed goatgrass in the TSA occurs in this area.
- The area is one of the largest un-trailed blocks of rare tallgrass plant community in the OSMP system.
- Livestock grazing occurs in the area. New trails could create visitor/agricultural conflicts.

## **8. Jefferson County Regional Trail Connections (Map 1, Location 8)**

There are four possible connections into Jefferson County. Trail planning will be done in cooperation with Jefferson County Open Space and other agencies and landowners. The Jefferson County Comprehensive Plan and the Bolder Valley Comprehensive Plan show the conceptual trail connection East of Highway 93. This regional trail connection is not anticipated to be completed before 2010.

## **Doudy Draw/Spring Brook Subarea**

### **9. Fowler Trail East Access (Map 1, Location 9)**

Visitors access Fowler Trail East from Eldorado Springs Drive on County Road 67 (CR67). CR 67 is open to motor vehicles up to the gate at the entrance to OSMP property. Use has been increasing at this access since it was purchased in 1993. There is no designated parking lot at this location, although cars typically parallel park along the road.

**Option 9a:** Construct a small, 6-8 trailhead parking lot on the flat area just southwest of the access gate and place no parking signs along CR67.

**Option 9b:** Allow roadside parking along CR 67. Minor improvements could be made to improve parking and safety.

**Option 9c:** Prohibit parking along CR 67. Parking would be accommodated at the Doudy Draw parking lot.

### **Issues**

- Parking at the Fowler Trail gate and along the narrow road can restrict emergency access.
- Boulder County has jurisdiction of County Road 67. Changes in public access require approval by Boulder County.
- Building another trailhead may increase use substantially in an area where a “backcountry” experience is the management goal.

### **10. Fowler Trail To Doudy Draw Trail Connection (Map 1, Location 10)**

This potential trail connection links the Fowler Trail to the Doudy Draw Trail and could include an adjacent loop trail.

**Management area context** – The area provides a transition between the Habitat Conservation Area and the Natural Area. It was initially proposed as a Habitat Conservation Area in the draft VMP, but was changed to a Natural Area in the final VMP with direction to monitor and restore the area, but not require on-trail travel. The town of Eldorado Springs and several residences are the closest development. Several undesignated trails in the area demonstrate the desire to link up the designated Fowler and Doudy Draw Trails. Because this is a natural area, on-trail access is encouraged, but not required.

Hiking, running and horse back riding are allowed in the area. Biking is not currently allowed. Dog walking is not allowed in the area, except for voice and sight on-corridor/leash requirements on the Fowler Trail. In Eldorado Canyon State Park dogs must be on leash on the Fowler Trail. Doudy Draw Trail is voice and sight/leash control, with seasonal leash requirements on the Doudy Draw Trail south of Community Ditch Trail from August 15 to October 15 to protect black bears.

**Desired Visitor Experience** – Provide passive recreational experiences consistent with a feeling of remoteness and good opportunities to observe wildlife. The area includes excellent views and opportunities to experience grasslands, forests, savannas and riparian areas.

**Desired Ecological Condition** – Protect the area’s high wildlife values and diversity, especially in Spring Brook, Lindsay Pond and north facing shrublands.

**Desired Cultural Condition** – Significant historic and prehistoric sites and paleontological localities have been identified. These sites and localities need to be protected. Some sites may be suitable for education and interpretation.

**Option 10a:** Construct a new trail that connects the Fowler Trail to Doudy Draw Trail. The proposed alignment of the trail utilizes the eastern part of the old railroad grade. The western portion of this trail has two options: 1) a trail segment from the first switchback of the Fowler Trail east entrance; or 2) a trail segment located further south along the Fowler Trail past the ripple rock section of the trail just before the Denver Water Board Canal.

**Option 10b:** Construct a new Fowler to Doudy Draw Trail connection in conjunction with a new western trail segment forming a trail loop. The western trail segment has two options: 1) utilize the Denver Water Board (DWB) Canal Road if permission is granted from the DWB; or 2) utilize a newly-constructed trail parallel and east of the DWB road on OSMP land.

## **Issues**

- Several undesignated trails occur in the area and need to be restored.

- Visitor safety along the Denver Water Board canal may be an issue.
- Public access is not currently allowed on the Denver Water Board Road.
- Significant historic and geological resources need to be protected.
- Prairie dogs occupy part of the mesa east of the Fowler Trail (CR 67) access.
- Federally and city protected wetlands occur throughout the Spring Brook drainage and adjacent drainages.
- Lindsay Pond contains important amphibian habitat, including northern leopard frogs.
- Spring Brook and surrounding habitats including meadows, mature forests, and riparian areas important for cavity nesting birds, forest nesting raptors, wild turkeys, and deer (see Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw TSA Inventory Report – Natural Resources section).
- Segments of the proposed trail would run through or adjacent to deer fawning grounds.
- Segments of the proposed trail cross drainages supporting high quality big bluestem communities and populations of dwarf lead plant.
- Critical habitat for Preble’s meadow jumping mouse occurs in the area. Any new trails would likely require US Fish and Wildlife Service approval.

## **11. Post Office Trail Connection (Map 1, Location 11)**

This access is a web of undesignated trails located in a drainage near the Eldorado Springs Post Office. Most of this trail network runs through private property to the north of OSMP. The Post Office Trail connects with Fowler Trail at four different locations on OSMP property.

**Option 11a:** Continue the current situation of multiple undesignated trails.

**Option 11b:** Construct a new trail or improve the most sustainable undesignated trail as the access. Close and restore remaining undesignated trails.

**Option 11c.** Close and restore undesignated trails. Access would be provided via CR 67.

### **Issues**

- Access is across Colorado State Park land and private property in some areas.

- Undesignated trails cause resource damage on steep terrain.
- The trail goes through prime black bear habitat, resulting in potential conflicts during the fall feeding season.

## **12. Walker Ranch Regional Trail Connection (Map 1, Location 12)**

OSMP connects with Eldorado Canyon State Park and Boulder County Parks and Open Space's Walker Ranch to the west. Hiking is the only currently permitted use on these trails. Trail planning will be done in cooperation with these agencies to investigate multiple use options in the future.

## **Activity Management Alternatives**

### **A. Dog Walking**

#### **Community Ditch Subarea**

A.1 Allow dogs under voice-and-sight or leash control in the Community Ditch Subarea.

#### **Flatirons Vista Subarea**

A.2 Require dogs on-leash in prairie dog colonies (**Map 1, Location 13**); otherwise allow dogs under voice-and-sight or leash in the Flatirons Vista Subarea.

#### **Doudy Draw / Spring Brook Subarea**

A.3 Require dogs to be on-leash and on-trail in the Doudy Draw / Spring Brook Subarea (a change from the existing situation for the western part of the NA where dogs are currently prohibited).

A.4 Continue to prohibit dogs in the Doudy Draw / Spring Brook Subarea, except for continuation of on-corridor voice-and-sight control on the Fowler Trail (**Map 1, Location 14**), which would make any new trails in this subarea no-dog trails.

### **B. Bicycling**

#### **Community Ditch Subarea**

B.1 Allow on-trail mountain biking in the Community Ditch Subarea.

### **Flatirons Vista Subarea**

#### **Doudy Draw-Flatirons Vista Trail Loops (Map 1, Location 6)**

B.2 Allow on-trail mountain biking on the trail segments on the outside of the “figure 8” trail loops, with a “refuge” from bikes in the middle of the trail loops.

B.3 Allow on-trail mountain biking all segments of the trails.

B.4 Do not allow on-trail mountain biking on any part of the trails except for the Doudy Draw Trail.

### **Doudy Draw / Spring Brook Subarea**

B.5 Allow on-trail mountain biking on trail alternative 10a but not 10b (**Map 1, Locations 10a and 10b**).

B.6 Allow on-trail mountain biking on the Fowler Trail (**Map 1, Location 14**).

## **C. Horseback Riding**

### **Community Ditch Subarea**

C.1 Allow horseback riding on-trail and off-trail in the Community Ditch Subarea.

### **Flatirons Vista Subarea**

C.2 Allow horseback riding on-trail and off-trail in the Flatirons Vista Subarea.

### **Doudy Draw / Spring Brook Subarea**

C.3 Require horseback riding to be on-trail in the Doudy Draw / Spring Brook Subarea.

C.4 Allow on-trail horseback riding only on trail alternative 10b but not 10a (**Map 1, Locations 10b and 10a**).

## **D. Paragliding / Hang Gliding (Map 1, Location # 15)**

D.1 Designate paragliding / hang gliding take-off and landing sites in the “bowl” of the Flatirons Vista mesa edge, with primary access provided by the new Doudy Draw-Mesa Rim trail loop. Parking access could occur at the nearby Doudy Draw or Marshall Mesa trailheads.

D.2 Designate paragliding / hang gliding take-off and landing sites in the “bowl” of the mesa edge, with access by off-trail travel. Parking access could occur at the nearby Doudy Draw or Marshall Mesa trailheads.

D.3 Prohibit paragliding / hang gliding in this area, in order to prevent creation of undesignated trails and spread of invasive weeds.

## **Land Management Activities**

### **E. Resource Protection Alternatives (Map 2 and Map 3)**

#### **Ground-Nesting Bird Resource Protections (Map 3, Location 1)**

E.1 Implement seasonal ground-nesting bird closures in an area east of Doudy Draw and north of the Doudy Draw Trail on Flatirons Vista, which would require on-trail travel and on-leash dog management; closures would apply from May 1-July 31.

#### **Forest-Interior Bird Resource Protections (Map 3, Location 2)**

F.3 Implement seasonal forest-interior bird nesting closure for mature ponderosa pine stands.

#### **Fall Bear-Feeding Resource Protections, August 15-October 15 (Map 2, Location 1 and Map 3, Location 3)**

G.4 Expand the seasonal leash requirement to include the entire riparian zone along the Doudy Draw Trail (extends east to the Xcel powerline easement).

G.5 Maintain the existing seasonal leash requirement.

#### **Lindsay Pond Resource Protections (Map 3, Location 4)**

H.6 Close Lindsay Pond year-round to visitor access to protect leopard frogs and other amphibians. The closure boundary would be demarcated with signs or fencing.

### **F. Forest Management Activities**

Two principal forested areas occur in the Natural Area of the TSA -- directly east of the Denver Water Board Road on the Lindsay property and on Flatirons Vista. Both of these areas have had some forest work done in the past and both require further treatment. The area east of the Denver Water Board Road has had both mechanical tree thinning and prescribed burns. Thinning in the area was done on about 22 acres during the 1999 and 2000 field seasons. Burns included the Lind-N stand in 2001 and 2003 and the Lindsay Meadow burn in 2004. On Flatirons Vista some minor tree thinning and limbing was completed in 2004.

No forest treatments are planned in the Natural Area for 2006. Several forest treatments are planned for this area over the next five years. The Lind-N stand would benefit from further thinning along the eastern edge of the stand. This project could utilize the existing

access in the area. On Flatirons Vista, further thinning and prescribed fire is necessary to restore more natural forest and grassland conditions. Access to these stands is along the upper portion of Doudy Draw trail and along the Xcel power line.

### **G. Agricultural Management Activities**

Livestock grazing is the primary agricultural use in the TSA. The grazing rotation changes each year based on staff input. There can be livestock in the TSA from May – December each year. Grazing periods typically range from 30 – 60 days.

The Flatirons Vista property has the most variable grazing schedule and may be used at any time by up to 250 cows. The pond located west of the Flatirons Vista trailhead is the primary water source for this property. There is also a corral located by the Flatirons Vista trailhead that is used to sort and load livestock. Additional pasture fencing and more frequent grazing rotations are being considered to resolve visitor/livestock conflicts and minimize visitor use of cattle trails.

## **Eldorado Mountain Habitat Conservation Area**

Several options for visitor use and resource protection exist in the HCA. Options include developing several new trails in the area, providing access through the off-trail permit program, closing and restoring undesignated trails and enacting seasonal wildlife closures to protect sensitive species. Several types of visitor activities are also possible including horseback riding, mountain biking, climbing and hiking.

### **Management Area Context**

The Eldorado Mountain Habitat Conservation Area is a relatively remote, large block of diverse habitats. It receives less visits than many other OSMP properties and is bisected by fewer undesignated trails than other areas. As stated in the Visitor Master Plan, the goals for habitat conservation areas include:

- Maintaining, enhancing, and restoring naturally functioning ecological systems and habitats for species of concern identified in the Boulder County and the Boulder Valley Comprehensive Plans.
- Providing public access and passive recreational opportunities that foster appreciation and understanding of ecological systems and have minimal impacts on native plant communities and wildlife habitats or other resources.
- Eliminating all undesignated trails, unless they are made part of the designated trails system or provide specialized access to appropriate low-use destinations.
- Where sustainable infrastructure exists, continuing to allow public access to appropriate destinations.

### **Activity Context**

The area offers access to several climbing destinations on undesignated trails in the western portion of the HCA. Other activities include off-trail hiking and horse riding, although use is relatively low. Dogs are prohibited in the area because there are no designated trails. The Mickey Mouse Wall area is closed from February 1 through July 31 to protect cliff nesting raptors.

### **Desired Visitor Experience**

The HCA offers more difficult terrain in a remote setting with no designated trails and low use. It provides some of the richest habitat in the region for many wildlife species. The area also provides important wildlife travel corridors on protected lands from the plains to the Continental Divide. Because of this high habitat quality, low visitor use, and remote location, the Eldorado Springs HCA offers both a remote back-country experience for visitors and a refuge for wildlife (see Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw TSA Inventory Report – Recreation Resources section).

### **Desired Ecological Condition**

The HCA is part of a network of public lands linking the Rocky Mountains to the Great Plains. Mature ponderosa pine stands support a variety of bird species, including northern goshawk, flammulated owl, and hairy woodpecker. The sedimentary cliffs of Eldorado Mountain provide nest sites for several raptor species including peregrine falcon, golden eagle, prairie falcon, red-tailed hawk, and turkey vulture. The large contiguous shrublands of Doudy Draw and Bull Gulch provide nesting habitat for many species of conservation concern including scrub jays, yellow warblers, and blue grosbeaks (see Eldorado Mountain/Doudy Draw TSA Inventory Report – Natural Resources section).

The Habitat Conservation Area offers a unique opportunity to maintain an extensive un-trailed low elevation foothills vegetation mosaic made up of ponderosa pine forest, montane grasslands, foothills shrublands and riparian areas. This area has regional importance for large predators like black bears, mountain lions and bobcats that alter their use patterns on most of the OSMP system to avoid areas of high human use.

### **Desired Cultural Condition**

Cultural resources in the HCA have been identified. They include historic, prehistoric and paleontological resources. Cultural and historic sites and paleontological localities will be protected.

## **Trail and Trailhead Alternatives**

**New Designated Trails in the HCA.** Require on-trail travel on new trails. Limited off-trail travel could be allowed through the HCA off-trail permit program.

**Option 19 (Map 1, Location 16):** Provide climbing access to the Mickey Mouse Wall.

This access route would follow an existing and well publicized climbing route to the Mickey Mouse Wall. It begins at the Conda Mine Road and travels south across OSMP property until crossing the railroad tracks at the climbing areas. Climbers typically walk through a railroad tunnel to reach the climbing walls. A new designated route could be constructed which travels over this tunnel to the climbing walls to provides access that requires technical climbing skills. An agreement would need to be secured with the Colorado Public Utilities Commission for the route over the tunnel.

**Option 20 (Map 1, Location 17):** Provide new trail from Conda Mine road to Denver Water Board (DWB) bridge.

This trail would originate at the Conda Mine Road, travel southeast through the HCA and connect with the DWB road at the bridge over the canal. For a portion of its length, it would follow existing undesignated trails. An agreement would need to be reached with the Denver Water Department on use of the bridge and road.

**Option 21 (Map 1, Location 18):** Provide a new trail in Upper Douly Draw/Bull Gulch.

This trail would access the HCA at the DWB bridge, travel south on the west side of Douly Draw/Bull Gulch, cross the gulch and head north back to the DWB road. An agreement between the city and the Denver Water Department on use of the bridge and road is needed.

**Limited New Designated Trails in the HCA.** Includes trail alternatives 19 and 20 but not 21 (Upper Douly Draw / Bull Gulch Trail Loop). Require on-trail travel on newly constructed or designated trails. Limited off-trail travel could be allowed through the HCA off-trail permit program.

**Off-Trail Permit Access In Place of Designated Trails** (except for trail alternative # 19 Mickey Mouse Climbing Access Trail). Limited off-trail travel could be allowed through the HCA off-trail permit program.

This option would preserve the opportunity for a more remote backcountry experience. This also provides an opportunity for wildlife to use a diverse foothills habitat mosaic without altering their use pattern.

## **Issues**

- The area allows for natural use patterns by wildlife (including bears, mtn lions, bobcats, etc).
- The area provides important east/ west migrations for species like deer and elk.
- The area provides fall foraging opportunities for bears and hunting opportunities for mountain lions without high potential for human conflicts.

- The area contains unusually high bird diversity, especially in upper Douly Draw/Bull Gulch.
- Significant cultural resources that need protection exist in the area.
- Visitor safety along the Denver Water Board canal may be an issue.
- Public access is not currently allowed on the Denver Water Board road.

## **Activity Management Alternatives**

### **H. Dog Walking**

H.1 Provide on-trail, on-leash dog management on new HCA trails, with the exception of the Mickey Mouse Climbing Access Trail (trail alternative 19 with no dogs allowed).

H.2 Allow dogs on-trail, on-leash only on the Conda Mine to Denver Water Board Bridge Trail (trail alternative 20).

H.3 Prohibit dogs in the HCA.

### **I. Bicycling**

I.1 Provide on-trail mountain biking access only on the Conda Mine to Denver Water Board Bridge Trail (trail alternative 20), which would connect to the Denver Water Board Road and the Fowler to Douly Draw Trail Connection.

I.2 Prohibit bicycle access in the HCA.

### **J. Horseback Riding**

J.1 Allow on-trail horseback riding on any new trails in the HCA, with off-trail access opportunities through the HCA off-trail permit program.

J.2 Allow on-trail horseback riding only on the Upper Douly Draw/Bull Gulch trail loop (trail alternative 21), along with off-trail access opportunities through the HCA off-trail permit program.

J.3 Allow on-trail horseback riding in the HCA, with no provision for off-trail equestrian travel under the HCA off-trail permit program.

J.4 Prohibit horseback riding in the HCA.

## **Land Management Activities**

### **K. Resource Protection Measure Alternatives**

#### **Cliff-Nesting Raptor Resource Protections (Map 2, Location 2)**

K.1 Maintain the existing seasonal closures from February 1-July 31, which are lifted in specific areas if birds do not nest. This closure would apply to the Mickey Mouse Climbing Access Trail and the Conda Mine to Denver Water Board Bridge Trail.

#### **Forest-Interior Bird Resource Protections (Map 3, Location 5)**

K.2 Implement seasonal forest-interior bird nesting closure for mature ponderosa pine stands.

#### **Bull Gulch / Upper Doudy Draw Resource Protections (Lindsay-Jeffco Property)**

K.3 Seasonally prohibit on-trail and off-trail travel on the Lindsay-Jeffco property to shrub-nesting birds and fall-feeding bears in Bull Gulch / Upper Doudy Draw area.

K.4 Prohibit on-trail and off-trail travel on the Lindsay-Jeffco property to protect shrub-nesting birds and fall-feeding bears in Bull Gulch / Upper Doudy Draw.

### **L. Forest Management Activities**

In 2005, approximately 50 acres of forest management was completed in the Eldorado Mountain HCA subarea. This treatment focused on the Lind-S forest stand and followed prescriptions developed in the OSMP Forest Ecosystem Management Plan. The management utilized historic roads in the area to get equipment on site. Management included cutting, chipping and hauling of wood. OSMP and City of Boulder Fire Department crews started work in mid-July and the project was completed by November.

There are two forest management projects planned for 2006 that will expand on the work completed in 2005. Both of these projects are south of the Boulder-Jefferson County line on the Lindsay-Jeffco property. The LJC-NE and LJC-SE projects will be completed in 2006 and are approximately 70 and 50 acres, respectively. Access to the LJC-NE stand will be along the same historic roads used for the 2005 work in the area. The LJC-SE stand is accessed by an old road bed that takes off from the Denver Water Board road halfway between the Doudy Draw drainage and the vehicle gate on the eastern edge of OSMP property. This road will be restored with native plants and seed when work is complete. Work will begin in the LJC-NE stand in late May and is projected to take about 18 weeks. Work in LJC-SE will begin after LJC-NE is complete and is projected to take about 12 weeks.

The majority of mechanical forest treatments planned for the HCA will be completed in 2006 but future management is necessary. Prescribed burns will be planned for the Lind-S and LJC-NE stands in the next five years. The meadow near the Conda Mine is also scheduled for slash pile burns. These will be completed in the winter when there is 4 to 6 inches of snow on the ground and will not require any vehicle access. Ongoing weed treatments will continue in the forest stands of the HCA. These treatments rely on hand pulling and spot spraying.